

## THE ATTITUDE OF BARBADIAN AND TRINIDADIAN TEACHERS TO INTEGRATION

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*This quantitative study investigated the opinions of primary school teachers regarding the integration process in Barbados and Trinidad. It utilized a cross sectional survey design and inferential statistics. Data collection was facilitated through the Opinions Relative to Integration Scale developed by Antonak and Larrivee (1995). Four research questions were addressed: (1) what are teachers' attitudes towards the integration of students with disabilities? (2) what differences exist between teachers' attitudes in Barbados and Trinidad? (3) what differences exist between males and female teachers' attitudes towards the integration of students with special needs? (4) do novice and more experienced teachers differ in their attitudes toward the integration of students with disabilities? Results suggested that Barbadian and Trinidadian express ambivalent attitudes towards including students with disabilities in regular education settings. Implications for teacher training are discussed.*

Reform initiatives over the last 30 years in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago have been aimed at enhancing inclusive education practices. On-going research recognizes the critical roles that teachers, and by extension their opinions, play in facilitating or hindering educational reform to facilitate inclusion or integration as the process is also referred to within these countries. In the Caribbean policy makers face a considerable challenge implementing inclusive education especially since education is regarded as having an entrenched elitism linked to a colonized past. We acknowledge the broader interpretation of 'inclusive education' as relating to socially just pedagogy for all citizens, regardless of age, ethnicity, race, religion, socioeconomic status, academic abilities, sexual orientation, and location. Indeed, we applaud this challenge of language to established exclusionary practices evident in schools and society (Conrad, Paul, Bruce, Charles, & Felix, 2010). However, for purposes of this paper, we will focus on children who have been described as having special needs, exceptionalities, or disabilities. We will use the term interchangeably with 'integration'.

For the Caribbean, inclusive education also referred to as integration is more readily evidenced through policy development, and rhetoric rather than legislation. As such, teacher resistance and public opinion are as important as government policy in supporting or subverting the cause. Determining the opinions of primary school teachers in these two Caribbean countries independent Barbados and the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago can go a long way to facilitating a model of inclusive education.

### *In the Land of the Flying Fish*

Barbados, the most easterly of the islands that comprise the Caribbean archipelago, lies 250 miles to the north-east of Trinidad and Tobago. It is approximately 166 square miles, and considered to be the most developed of the Caribbean islands. The education system ranges from pre-school, through primary, secondary, and tertiary education; catering for 28,000 primary school age students from a population of 280,000 (Barbados, Ministry of Education, 2008). The Barbados government responded to an international trend towards inclusive education ingrained in the 1994 Salamanca Statement and promoted by UNESCO, this in turn had implications for teacher education, curricula, and public policy. According to the UNESCO's 2007

International Bureau of Education, teacher education while not the only strategy remains a critical and promising effort (UNESCO- IBE, 2007). The government has invested significantly in teacher education through collaborative efforts with the Mount St. Vincent University, Canada, and Barbados' Erdiston Teachers College. Other efforts are being made at the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies - School of Education. Programs include a M.ED (Inclusive and Special Education), B. Ed (Sp. Ed.) and Educational Psychology. In addition, varying models of leadership, collaboration and classroom management models have been introduced targeting learners at risk in areas of literacy and numeracy.

Through its special education policy reform, the Ministry of Education in Barbados uses both 'pull-out' and full inclusion models. The former facilitates part regular/part resource centre and itinerant services through learning Support Coordinators. Students in the full inclusion model remain in the regular classroom all of the time and participate via a modified curriculum or more responsive individualized pedagogy and adaptive curricula.

Barbados articulates a position that education is a basic human right and advocates internationally for equal access to education for all categories of persons with disabilities as an integrated part of its education system. The government has reiterated its commitment to developing a special education policy to address the diverse needs of all learners where access, belonging, acceptance, and a sense of community meets the needs of students with mental and physical challenges in regular schools.

#### *Land of Calypso and Steelpan*

Trinidad and Tobago is the southernmost of the Caribbean islands. It comprises 1980 square miles and is located just northeast of Venezuela and northwest of Guyana. Trinidad and Tobago's economy is primarily industrial. The primary school population is 133,692 from an overall population of 1.3 million (National Report on the Development of Education in Trinidad and Tobago: Inclusive Education, 2008). There are five levels of educational institutions: early childhood, primary, secondary, post-secondary/non-tertiary, and tertiary according to the National Report (2008). The administration of these institutions is organized according to eight geo- educational districts.

An estimated 25% of students have exceptional needs related to learning and behavioural challenges. The National Policy on Student Support Services (2004) posits that 78% of students referred are characterized with combined learning and behavioural challenges. Such students are integrated into the nation's 545 primary schools (64 being private) and 929 early childhood centres (public and private).

In 1980, the government set up a special unit aimed at establishing guidelines and supervising select government assisted special schools. The Special Education Unit as it was subsequently named, assumed immediate responsibility for six government assisted special schools. When the first and only government developed special school -- the Pointe-a-Pierre Government Special School -- was developed in 1988, it was subsumed under the Unit's authority.

Between 1987 and 1990, the Ministry of Education organized a special education sensitization project in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the University of Manitoba. This targeted teachers and senior educational personnel and went a long way to set a foundation for inclusive practice. The Pilgrim's Report [National Consultation on Special Education, 1990] and the National Task Force on Education (White Paper) Education Policy Paper 1993 - 2003 further emphasized that students with special needs have the right to optimum development in a wholesome and equitable educational environment. By 1997, special education teachers had organized themselves and in collaboration with the teachers association and the University of Sheffield pioneered its own education initiative (Pedro & Conrad, 2006). The 2004 Report on the Development of Education in Trinidad and Tobago, asserted governments' commitment to a socially inclusive education system, and the need to sustain such practices. In 2004, the Student Support Services Division (SSSD) was established. It services the needs of all students in all regular and special schools through an Inclusion Specialist and seven educational district teams. Such services include prevention, early identification of and intervention for identified students, as well as to provide parent and in-service education. In 2007, Trinidad and Tobago formally signed the UN Convention on the rights of persons who are perceived or/and identified as having disabilities.

#### *Integration*

Often within the Caribbean, integration and inclusion is used interchangeably. One might argue that

integration is generally the reality and inclusion the goal (Conrad & Brown, 2011). Overall, integration aims at facilitating the opening of doors and the lowering of discriminatory barriers to the optimum education of students with special educational needs. Integrating students with disabilities within regular education contexts helps children accept differences, increases tolerance, appreciation, and understanding of others, and contributes to citizenship preparation (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005).

We note however that integration and inclusion are not synonymous terms in the research literature. According to Thomas, Walker, and Webb (1997), integration is characterized by emphasis on the needs of 'special students', changing or remedying the subject, the merits to the student with special needs, of being integrated, and formalized support services. Inclusion on the other hand suggests benefits to all students, informal support and the expertise of mainstream teachers, effective teaching for all by all, and changing school culture.

#### *Theoretical Perspective on Attitudes*

Attitudes are described by Chambers and Forlin (2010) as learned, evaluative responses associated with personal beliefs that in turn influence intentions and behaviours. Attitudes are shaped by experience and implicit learning and may be reflective of one's personality (Zimbardo & Lippie, 1991). Cognitive, affective, and pre-dispositional behaviours constitute related components of one's attitude (Johnson & Howell, 2009). Teacher attitudes have long been associated with effective inclusive practices (Boyle, Scriven, Durning & Downes, 2011; Cagran & Schmidt, 2011; Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000); with attitude development and modification remaining important areas of educational research (Weisman & Garza, 2002).

Research by Baron and Byrne (1991) identify three factors that influence people's attitudes and subsequent professional behaviour. These include personal experience, observation of models, and emotions. In terms of education Avramidis et al., (2000) determine that positive assumptions of inclusion by regular education teachers centred on whether students require additional pedagogical support or behaviour management expertise.

There is a general consensus that the views and attitudes of regular education teachers are critical elements of the inclusive principle (Dyson, Howes & Roberts, 2004). When policy makers and teachers among others do not recognize, or exclude students with diverse needs, they are in fact inadvertently creating a hierarchy of status. By extension, according to Fraser (2000), this is a new form of injustice. Some research like Cribb and Gewirtz (2005) and Lynch and Lodge (2002) also see inclusive practice as a problem of learner recognition. Teachers who fail to recognize the differences arising from pupils' background, educational needs, or socio-economic status, and treat everyone the same, regenerate injustice (Pecek, Cuk & Lesar, 2008). Inclusive education then is linked to teacher attitude and responsiveness and supported by changes at all levels--classroom, school, policy-makers and administrators, and the wider society (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). It is about the relationship between school and macro cultures. Teachers' responsiveness is associated with beliefs that all students have the right to an appropriate education with their peers; and a readiness by such teachers to assume the responsibility for this. Appropriate responsiveness might be manifested by a willingness of teachers to utilize universal design for learning principles, respect for and recognition of all learners.

Positive teacher attitudes nurture belongingness (Meijer, Soriano, & Watkins, 2006) and may directly affect behaviour with and by students; and by extension classroom climate and student outcomes. According to Ainscow (2008) effective teaching is handicapped in conditions where teacher attitudes and classroom culture community regard some as being in need of remediation or as 'deficient'. Teachers are a key factor in promoting, hindering and or implementing inclusion through their values, orientation, and their ability to accept responsibility for teaching all students (Dyson et al., 2004). Attitudes provide a simple structure for organizing and responding to an ambiguous and complex environment. Attitudes held by teachers thus affect students' academic achievement and behaviour (Jeon & Peterson, 2003).

Attitude change is an on-going assimilative process connecting past with present and shaping future (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Beliefs and attitudes can lead to avoiding, reacting, or responding differently to new situations (Haddock & Maio, 2004). Attitude change then requires stakeholders both as students and teachers to reflect on the ethical implications of their philosophies and practices (Carr, 1993). We contend that positive teacher attitude plays an important part in integrating or including students with diverse needs in regular classrooms. Notions of coping suggesting a focus on tolerance rather than

successful learning outcomes are more associated with the era of integration (Ellis & Blamires, 2007).

#### *Teacher Education*

Effective teacher education can bridge the gap between the included and excluded, the privileged and marginalized. This might be achieved through addressing the beliefs, values, and attitudes of teacher candidates to bring about critical transformation (Boler, 2004). This position is based upon the assumption that teachers are the prime implementers of inclusion (Cardona, 2009). However, as Beare (1985) contends these teachers are often not prepared to meet the needs of students with significant learning needs, nor are their attitudes easily changed. Pre-service education, Beare asserts, is the best approach to improve teachers' feelings of competence about teaching students with disabilities. For some, the concern is with students having severe emotional and behavioural difficulties (Cagran & Schmidt, 2011; Forlin, 2006; Stough, Montague, & Landmark, 2006). For others, the challenge to teachers is with students having severe to profound intellectual disabilities and/or sensory impairments. Whether the focus is on pre or in-service teacher education however, there is an increasing acceptance that teacher preparation can play a significant role in achieving the desired outcomes for inclusion.

Studies of both pre-service and in-service teacher attitudes towards inclusion have shown that teacher attitudes are affected by the quality of preparation received (Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman, & Merbler, 2008; Winter, 2006). These studies conclude that improving and increasing training provision of the pre-service phase of teacher education would be the most effective method of promoting better attitudes and competence to inclusion. As Lambe (2007) pointed out, *if student teachers complete their pre-service education without having developed positive attitudes toward inclusion this will be very difficult to change and may have a negative effect on the inclusion of learners with disabilities* (p. 63). Other research by Tait and Purdie (2000) found that positive attitudes are evident in student teachers early in their initial training and suggest that improved preparation at the pre-service phase would be the best point to nurture these attitudes. An emphasis on attitudes and beliefs in teacher education rather than content mastery would facilitate more effective inclusive practices (Pearson, 2007). If negative attitudes are not addressed during initial teacher education, they may pose a threat to inclusive education efforts (Forlin, 2010).

Successful strategies to foster positive teacher attitudes include: continued and varied professional development exercises (Cagran & Schmidt, 2011); single courses (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Pierson & Howell, 2006); and content-infused approaches (Sharma, Forlin, Loreman & Earle, 2006; Voltz, 2003); and inclusive units of study (Lancaster & Bain, 2007). Factors that contribute to attitude development and change among teachers include: content and pedagogical knowledge (Carroll, Forlin & Jobling, 2003; Shippen & Associates, 2005); field experience and teaching practice, self-efficacy (Donegan, Hong, Trepanier-Street & Finkelstein, 2005); confidence (Aldrich, 2002); personal and professional experience with disabilities (Kauffman, Lanfrum, Mock & Sayeski, 2005); administrative support and resources; planning time; teachers' personalities; characteristics and severity of the disabilities (Hastings & Oakford, 2003); level of qualification (Kauffman et al, 2005); and class size (Rheams & Bain, 2005). Direct engagement with persons with disabilities, teaching experiences, the use of case studies, and knowledge about inclusive education legislation and policy legislation are also associated with changing teacher attitudes (Boling, 2007; Campbell, Gilmore & Cuskelley, 2003; Johnson & Howell, 2009); (Tait & Purdie, 2000; Loreman, Forlin & Sharma, 2007b). Teacher attitudes can be also improved by increasing teacher candidates' knowledge about learners with disabilities (Elhoweris & Alsheikh, 2006) and by including more alternative instructional strategies. Additional strategies include: disability simulations, guest speakers with disabilities, interviewing diverse learners; and having outstanding teachers with successful inclusive practices (Miller, 2008; Salend, 2010).

#### **Methodology**

In this quantitative study we utilized cross sectional survey design to collect data about teachers' attitudes towards the integration of students with special education needs in primary education settings in Trinidad and Barbados. Our inquiry was guided by the following research question: (1) Are there significant differences in attitude towards integration of students with special needs in regular education? (2) Are there significant differences between attitudes of teachers from Barbados and those from Trinidad and Tobago? (3) Do novice teachers differ significantly from more experienced teachers? and (4) Do male and female teachers differ in their attitude toward integration of students with special needs.

### *The Opinion Relative to Integration Scale*

The Opinion Relative to Integration of students with Disabilities (ORI) was originally developed by Larrivee and Cook (1979), and revised by Antonak and Larrivee (1995). The revised ORI consists of 25 items, 12 of which are negatively worded; e.g. 'integration of students with disabilities will require significant changes in general classroom procedures'. The other 13 positively worded, e.g. 'Integration offers mixed group interaction that will foster understanding and acceptance of differences among students'. The ORI comprises four Sub-scales: (1) Benefits of Inclusion (2) Integrated Classroom Management; (3) Perceived ability to teach students with disabilities; and (4) Factors affecting Special Education versus General Education.

The first Sub-scale *Benefits of Inclusion* comprises four positively worded and four negatively worded statements. An example of a positively worded statement is: 'The challenge of being in a general classroom will promote the academic growth of the student with a disability'. An example of a negatively worded statement is: 'The presence of students with disabilities will not promote acceptance of differences on the part of students without disabilities';

Sub-scale 2, *Integrated Classroom Management*, comprises five positively worded statements and five negatively worded statements. The positive statement is characterized by 'Students with disabilities will not monopolize the general-classroom teacher's time', while 'It is likely that the student with a disability will exhibit behaviour problems in a general classroom' is an example of a negatively worded statement.

For Sub-scale 3 *Perceived Ability to Teach Students with Disabilities* this too comprises positively and negatively worded statements. There are two positively worded statements and one negatively worded statement. An example of a positively worded statement is 'General-classroom teachers have the ability necessary to work with students with disabilities'. An example of a negatively worded statement is 'Integration of students with disabilities will necessitate extensive retraining of general-classroom teachers'.

The fourth and final Sub-scale *Factors Affecting Special Education versus General Education* integrated general education comprises two positively worded statements; for example 'Students with disabilities can best be served in general classrooms' and two negatively worded statements, for example 'Teaching students with disabilities is better done by special- than by general-classroom teachers'.

According to Antonak and Larivee (1995) scores on the ORI ranged from 0-150 and the closer teachers' scores are to 150 the stronger the support is for students with special needs to be included in regular education settings. However the authors do not report what scoring ranges constitute either weak or moderate support for inclusive education.

On a sample of 376 undergraduate teachers, Antonak and Larivee (1995) noted good measures of reliability for the ORI. They recorded split half reliability estimates of 0.82 on the Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient test and a Cronbach's alpha homogeneity coefficient of 0.88. However, internal reliability statistics were not reported in this study for the four subscales of the ORI. For this study we report the following internal consistency reliability coefficients for the Sub-scales and the entire scale: Benefits of Inclusion = 0.71; Integrated Classroom Management = 0.65; Perceived Ability to Teach Students with Disabilities = 0.64; Special vs. Inclusion in General Education = 0.58; The ORI = 0.83.

### *The Sample*

Teachers in the study utilised a convenience sample of 485 teachers: Barbados = 231; Trinidad = 254. Most of the teachers taught in general education settings 76.4% (365), while 5.4% (26) were Special Educators. Of those sampled 18.8% (91) were Male and 81.2% (394) were Female. With regard to teaching experience, 272 (56%) taught for 12 years or more, and 84 (17.9%) taught for five years or less.

In Barbados, the participants in the study were 231 primary school teachers who taught at 11 primary schools practicing inclusion. In Trinidad, participants comprised teachers completing graduate and undergraduate courses in education at two universities. Participating teachers were qualified teachers at primary schools. Of questionnaires returned, 17 were rejected because of either the absence of demographic data, or non-response to four or more items on the ORI as instructed by Antonak and Larivee (1995).

*Procedures used in the study*

In Barbados, the data were collected by undergraduate education students who took a thirteen-week course in special education. In order to conduct the study permission was sought from the Ministry of Education and school principals to have undergraduate students administer the questionnaire in Barbados to teachers at participating schools. Principals were also asked to identify coordinating teachers who could liaise with students in the event that teachers were unable to return the questionnaire the same day. Teachers were briefed about the research, its goals and how the results were to be used to inform teacher training. In Barbados 300 questionnaires were distributed and 231 were returned, this represents a response rate of 77%.

In Trinidad research assistants were selected to administer questionnaires to teachers in a teacher training programme at the university in that island. Teachers were briefed about the goals of the research and were asked to return the questionnaires to the research assistants when they were completed. Participating teachers were qualified teachers at primary schools. Of questionnaires returned, seventeen were rejected because of either the absence of demographic data, or non-response to four or more items on the ORI as instructed by Antonak and Larrivee (1995). We report descriptive statistics. In addition, we ran t-test to test differences between teachers from Barbados and Trinidad and to determine whether there were significant differences between males and females in attitude towards integration. In addition, we ran ANOVAs to compare differences among teachers based on their years of teaching.

**Findings**

Scores on the ORI were calculated according to the directions noted in the scoring key by Antonak and Larrivee (1995). Scores for teachers in Trinidad and Barbados were 8 - 138 (Mean = 77.91, SD = 22.17). This suggests that teachers' attitudes were mainly ambivalent. Scores for *Benefits of Inclusion* were from 0-48, actual scores fell from 5-48 (Mean= 32.24, SD = 8.65). *Inclusion and Classroom Management* score were between 0 to 60, actual scores ranged from 1 - 57 (Mean = 32.87, SD= 9.54). *Perceived Ability to Teach Students with Disabilities* possible scores were between 0 – 18, actual scores were between 0-18 (Mean= 4.61, SD = 4.41). Scores for *Special vs Inclusion in General Education* ranged from 0- 23, actual scores were between 0-23 (Mean = 8.12, SD= 5.40). We also investigated significant differences between teachers' opinions in Barbados and Trinidad based on the four ORI subscales.

**Table 1. Differences in teacher's attitudes in Barbados and Trinidad on the ORI and its subscales**

	Barbados (n=231)		Trinidad (n=254)		Effect size <i>d</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	
<b>ORI</b>	81.00	25.29	75.09	18.50	2.95*	.27
<b>Benefits of Inclusion</b>	31.83	8.76	32.62	8.55	-1.00	
<b>Inclusion and CR Management</b>	33.39	10.32	32.39	8.76	1.13	
<b>Perceived Ability to Teach</b>	6.01	4.96	3.33	3.39	6.89*	.64
<b>Special vs. General Education</b>	9.16	5.87	7.17	4.75	4.08*	.37

Research Question 1 sought to find out whether differences existed between teachers' attitudes in Barbados and Trinidad. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if significant differences exist between Barbadian and Trinidadian teacher's attitudes towards integration. Results suggest that significant differences in teacher attitudes were reported  $t(483) = 2.95, p=.003, d=.27$  between teachers in Barbados ( $M=81.00$ ) and their counterparts in Trinidad ( $M= 71.09$ ).

Results also suggested that significant differences in teacher attitudes were reported on *Perceived ability to Teach students with Disabilities*  $t(483) = 6.89, p=.000, d=.64$  between teachers in Barbados ( $M=6.01$ )

and their counterparts in Trinidad ( $M = 3.33$ ). In addition, differences were also recorded on *Special vs. Inclusion in General Education*  $t(482) = 4.08, p = .000, d = .37$  between teachers in Barbados ( $M = 9.16$ ) and their counterparts in Trinidad ( $M = 7.17$ ). This suggests that while Barbadian teachers held more positive views about their ability to teach students with special needs, they also felt that as far as is practical that these students should be in the regular education settings.

Research Question 2 sought to find out whether differences existed between male and female teachers' attitudes towards the integration of students with special needs. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if significant differences exist between male and female teachers' attitudes towards integration. Results suggest that no significant differences in teacher attitudes were reported  $t(483) = -1.63, p = .103$  between male ( $M = 74.49$ ) and female teachers ( $M = 78.70$ ). Significant differences were also not reported on any of the four factors of the ORI.

Research Question 4 sought to investigate whether differences exist between novice and experienced teachers' attitudes in study. ANOVA was conducted to determine if significant differences exist between novice and more experienced teachers' attitudes towards integration. Results suggest that no significant differences in teacher attitudes were reported  $F(3, 453) = 1.162, p = .324$  between teachers with 1-5 years experience ( $M = 78.43$ ), 6-11 years experience ( $M = 75.50$ ), teachers with 12-23 years of experience ( $M = 75.92$ ) and those with over 23 years of experience ( $M = 80.48$ ).

### Discussion

This study utilized the *Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Special Needs* (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995) to measure a sample of primary school teachers' attitudes in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education settings. The findings of this research suggest that there were significant differences between Barbadian and Trinidadian teachers' attitudes towards integrating special needs students in general education settings. More research is needed to understand the underlying factors, which influence the attitudes of Caribbean teachers towards the integration of students with special needs in mainstream settings. However primary school teachers' attitudes in Barbados emerged as more positive and this is interesting and begs an exploration of the socio-cultural differences between groups of teachers in both islands. The study by Conrad et al. brings a closer focus on the efforts of special educators to expose their charges to regular school experiences might allow another window of exploration. There was no indication from the findings however of an overall positive response to inclusive special education practices. This is more supportive of the recent meta-analysis of de Boer, Pijl, Minnaert, and Minnaert (2011).

In general, teachers' attitudes can best be described as ambivalent which suggest that while they are not necessarily opposed to the idea of integrating students with special needs they do have real concerns about the suitability of the general education setting for meeting the educational needs of these students. These findings are not surprising as studies by de Boer et al. (2011); Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996); Loucks-Horsley and Roody (1990) supports the view that while primary school teachers express positive attitudes towards integration they remain sceptical about full inclusion.

Findings on the ORI subscale *Perceived Ability to Teach* students with special needs and *Special vs. Inclusion in General Education* settings revealed significant differences between teachers in Trinidad and Barbados. For teachers in Trinidad it suggests that they more so than their counterparts in Barbados do not feel confident in their ability to teach these students in their classrooms. Similarly, significant differences were reported between teachers in both islands about the suitability of the general education setting as opposed to special education to cater to the learning needs of students with disabilities. While Barbadian teachers seemed to express positive attitudes towards the integration of students with special needs, they believed that the exercise needed to be practical and that only those students who could be successfully accommodated should be in regular education setting. These findings are supported for example by research conducted by Hammond and Lawrence (2003); which suggest that teachers in general education express a concern about their lack of adequate training to teach special needs students.

### Conclusion

There is sufficient evidence in the literature that suggests that teacher attitudes are a decisive factor in determining the success of inclusive education programmes and the philosophy of inclusion (Jerlinder, Danermark & Gill, 2010; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Niemeyer & Proctor, 2002). More than this, it will be teachers who determine whether or not the tenets associated with the philosophy of inclusion translate into the actual practice within educational domains. This research suggests that teachers perceive



themselves to be under prepared and in need of further training in order to teach and accommodate students with special education needs in general education settings.

These findings therefore have implications for the way teachers are trained at Teacher's College in the Caribbean with more needing to be done especially among younger teachers in pre-service programmes who may have had little exposure to students with disabilities. Teacher preparation programmes will also have to be developed to ensure that values associated with inclusion are inculcated and that inclusive pedagogies are a part of the repertoire accessed by these students as part of their professional development.

For models of effective inclusion to move from idealism and rhetoric towards equity, advocacy, and socially just practices, there must also be change in school organization and leadership (Conrad & Brown, 2011). This would garner support from general education teachers who believe that they are ill prepared to undertake the challenges associated with teaching special needs students and create greater opportunities for schools to become less exclusionary in terms of who they serve.

We suggest that for future research, investigators explore the importance of teacher attitudes in facilitating inclusive practices and the factors that account for variability in teacher attitudes towards integration in the Caribbean. Another key question is, how can teacher preparation programmes better prepare teachers to teach in more diverse classroom settings?

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